Visible Church. They should never be invited or exhorted to join it. They constitute the best, the most hopeful part of the Christian army in training for Christian service. God's decree of election proceeds largely along the line of Christian families. It is the duty of parents and other Christian officers, indeed of all in full communion with the Visible Church, so to train these young Christians, to set them so good an example, that they will never have to be stigmatized as "Religious Criminals."

St. Louis, Mo.

Our Boys and Girls

RICHARD'S FRIENDS.

When the baseball club known as the "Victors" heard that Richard Ebbert was ill, they postponed a very important game of ball to consider how they could help him. Richard was a good boy of thirteen, who peddled papers and helped his mother, who was a widow, while the "Victors" were little lads of six and seven. And the reason they felt so interested was that Richard had been their friend and champion, and when a crowd of rough boys wanted to break up their game and drive them from their little field he always routed the bad boys.

"Mamma says Mrs. Ebbert will have an awful hard time now that Richard is ill," said Claude dolefully. "I wish I hadn't spent all my money for this mask. I'd take him some oranges or something."

"My mamma says Richard always earned enough for the rent," said Joe. "Now there's nobody to carry his papers."

"Let us carry the papers!" cried Tom eagerly. "We can earn the money and give it to Richard's mother."

"No one of us could budge that big sack," said Leonard.

"We'll each take a street and it won't be a load for anybody. We can do it," said George.

Like a flash they sped down the street, and very soon they were talking over the plan with Mrs. Ebbert. She helped them divide the patrons so each of the nine boys could take a street or two, and without thinking very much about the game they had on hand they were out delivering the papers.

"A new paper boy?" said an old lady, peering at Tom with her near-sighted eyes. "I don't know about this. I've had Richard for years, and I don't want to change."

"Richard is sick, ma'am, and I am helping till he gets well," said Tom eagerly.

"Is that so? Well, I'm glad Richard has such good friends. You may bring the paper every day and here is the pay in advance. I will send some fruit to Richard this very day. I didn't know he was ill."

Up and down the streets the boys went, explaining and delivering, until the whole village was interested in the sick boy. Flowers and good things to eat and fruits fairly rained down in the little cottage, and Richard said he would have to hurry and get well to see all his kind friends.

"I can never thank the 'Victors' enough," he said as he lay propped up in a big chair out under the old apple tree. "They did so much for me, and all I ever did for them was to drive away some boys who were mean to them."

"That was a bigger thing than we did," cried all the boys. "You just remember, Richard, that we stand by our friends, and you are the best boy friend we have in this town. Take your time to getting well, and we'll look after the papers. We have twenty new subscribers for you, and there'll be lots more before you're back at work. Most of the boys make fun of us, but you were always our friend."

"I'll never forget you," said Richard. "I tell you, it pays to have friends like these, doesn't it, mother?"

Mrs. Ebbert put her arms about Richard, and looked gratefully upon the boys. With glistening eyes she quietly said something the boys remembered for a long time.

"Boys, it's the greatest thing in the world. Just fill your life with helpful things done out of love for others whether they can repay it or not; God will mark those deeds down in heaven and they will never be forgotten."—Hilda Richmond, in S. S. Times.

JUST THE SAME.

"Mother," said Frances, at the breakfast table, "I think I'd like to stay at home this morning and not go to church."

"Don't you feel well?" asked Mrs. Lewis, giving her daughter a concerned look.

"Yes, I feel perfectly well," answered Frances, with obvious truthfulness, as she buttered her third waffle, "but I don't feel like going to church. Let me stay at home today. I'll read a sermon, a good, long one. It will be just the same," she coaxed.

At five minutes of eleven the gate clanged behind the last belated churchgoer, and Frances, left in sole possession of the house, gave herself to truant enjoyment of the situation.

"But, first I'll read the sermon," she decided with laudable conscientiousness. She selected a not unreasonably long one, and read it carefully from beginning to end; then she closed the book with an energetic snap and entered upon a lively frolic with Trix, her little spaniel. When this amusement began to pall Frances descended to the kitchen to reconnoitre, but she found old Rachel was resentful of the unaccustomed visit. Rachel's Sabbath mornings were, as a rule, peaceful, and immune from interruption.

"Why ain't you gone to church wid de rest ob de folks?" she asked, displeasure manifest in every syllable.

"I didn't want to go," answered Frances.

"You had business to go 'long to church wid de others."

From her own room upstairs Frances heard the front door open, and then the sound of voices in the hall below. She sprang up eagerly and was at the mirror smoothing her disordered locks into tidiness when the door opened and her mother appeared.

"I came to tell you, Frances," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone, "that you may have your dinner here in your room today." Frances turned a pair of bewildered eyes toward her mother, who met the look reassuringly.

"I'm not punishing you for not going to church," she said, frankly, "and there will be no difference whatever in the dinner served you and ours. It will be just the same." The intonation was precisely Frances' own at the breakfast table.

"I—I thought I heard Cousin Robert's voice in the hall as you came in," said Frances, meekly.

"You did. He came home with us, and is going to stay to dinner."

Frances was a plucky little girl, but the turn of affairs was more than she had counted on. "Of course, it won't be just the same," she muttered to herself as the door closed. "You don't eat just to eat—you eat to talk and listen. And mother knows it, too."

There was a little knock at the door, and it was opened by a neat maid bringing in a large and well-filled tray. Even the tiny vase had not been forgotten.

"Mrs. Lewis says here's her little bell"—the maid touched the small call bell—"an' if you want anything just ring for me." She turned away, then added: "Better ring sorter hard, so I'll be sure to hear it from the dinin' room. They keep up such a-talkin.'"

"I shan't want anything," said Frances.

But down in the dining room her cause was being championed by Cousin Robert.

"I don't think you're fitting the punishment to the crime, Kate," he said. "Remember, your ancestry is partly Scotch."

"It isn't punishment," replied his hostess. "It is a process of reasoning, a case of applied argument. Frances said that reading a sermon at home would be equivalent to going to church. It might be morally, and the dinner she is eating in solitude is the material equivalent of ours, but I want it to be borne in on Frances that man is a social animal."

"Borne in, but not rubbed in," protested Cousin Robert. "Can't you send for her to have dessert with us?"

When Frances slipped into her seat a few minutes later she looked up, to find her cousin's eyes fixed gravely upon her.

"Has it been borne in on you, Frances, that man is a social animal?" he asked.

"It certainly has," said Frances. "Mother, am I to have plenty of dessert; I didn't eat much dinner."—The Churchman.

SUSPICION.

When Ellen Cardell went up the steps to Mrs. Bruce's door, her face was red with vexation, and the angry tears were starting in her eyes.

"Oh, Mrs. Bruce, I'm the loneliest, most unhappy girl in Greenwood!"

Mrs. Bruce looked at her calmly. "I noticed you coming along the street," she said. "Let me see; wasn't it Alma Norcross that passed you just before you got to the house?"

Ellen looked up with eyes blazing through her tears. "Don't mention her name to me! She has treated me dreadfully, and deserted me—just like all the rest."

Undisturbed, Mrs. Bruce went on: "I noticed that you didn't speak to Alma, though she turned toward you and tried to attract your attention. What is it that she has done?"

"It was something that she didn't do. When Aunt Martha died, she never mentioned it, nor spoke one word of sympathy."

Mrs. Bruce turned her head a hide a faint smile. "Your Aunt Martha—?"

"Yes! Aunt Martha Raymond at Stamford."

"I see. And was Alma acquainted with her?"

"No, of course not; but she has heard me talk about her hundreds of times, and knew how much I loved her."

"Did you tell Alma about your loss?"

"N-no; but it was in the Tribune."